7 Mar 1927

69

Here you are — Standing shoulder to shoulder with the Hon John Collier!

I've just been to your show: Great admiration: will write detailed criticism of no great importance perhaps but never mind that in a day or two.

Please wait

RW.

Staten says she must get Desmond abroad. Is there a place called Mourrian?.

VB

I shall be very happy to see you.

74a

52 Tavistock Square,
London,
W.C.1.
Telephone: Museum 2621

5th March
1927

Dearest,

I dont suppose there is anything more to say about the Clive affair. My impression is that he'd like to break, but as you say, chatting is not his line. We have now, at last, settled about our travels. We shall get to Cassis on Thursday 31st, & stay till Wednesday April 6th when we take boat for Sicily. So could you angelically take us two bedrooms, or one with two beds, at the Cendrillon for that time? I suppose there are other hotels — in fact I know there are — if the Cendrillon is full: but we leave it to you. I suppose a sitting room is out of the question. However, we shall no doubt plant ourselves largely upon you. In fact I'm getting very morose & disconsolate without you & Angelica, whom I depend on entirely, I find, for congenial conversation: At this moment, in this pouring rain, I could be gossiping with you: much

74a ✓

better than sitting here, writing interminable letters to the Eliot fund subscribers, who never answer. Still, theres your blessed art to be considered, I suppose. I'm rather nervous about criticising your pictures: I made such howlers with Roger: I said I thought he'd improved vastly, whereupon, of course, every picture I praised had been painted 10 years ago. He only sold 3, I think: Porter 4. The point about you is that you are now mistress of the phrase. All your pictures are built up of flying phrases. This is to me a very exciting & congenial stage. They have an air of complete spontaneity. The downs seem to billow: yet the hay cart is perfectly substantial. I daresay your problem will now be to buttress up this lyricism with solidity. I pronounce no opinion on that. I think we are now at the same point: both mistresses your medium as never before: both therefore confronted with entirely new problems of structure. Of course your colour intrigues me, seduces, & satisfies me exquisitely. I do not suppose that I get to the end of the maze by any means: my susceptibilities are freakish & wayward. At the Flemish show (to explain my weakness) I liked the two Breugels (Icarus: a ^ Storm: I'm not sure of the man's name) far better than anything. But what could one see? Only troops of clergy

74 B v

with Mervyn in some other capacity. He seems very reluctant to go. But as it is, we could never leave the Press for any length of time He can't think of things — & either we must give it up, or try some professional. Mervyn is a dry stick: God knows.

Did I tell you of my visit from George? He & the Percy Circus pill maker came together. George was swollen, affable, overdressed, beyond belief. He can only mumble & is had just fallen flat in Berkeley Sqre & strained his back. He had been to see you, but only found an old gentleman & some pictures in the hall. "Oh yes I've seen Vanessa's curtains — I should think so! And do you embroider that kind of thing too? Does poor Leonard wear them out of doors? hah hah. NYPL I see you've gone in for decoration too! Look as if they'd not taken very long to do! — But perhaps they think them out beforehand." Then he told us interminable stories ~~ab~~ to his own glory: how he's on some Commission, & has cheques made out to him for £122,000: "to me, mark you, in my own name: all the taxpayers money." So I said, "Well George they'll be making you a K.C.B. next!" "Making me? I should rather think so. Why my names been on the list there 12 years" I never saw anyone so completely self-satisfied: so insolent; so prosperous; & so condescending. He never stopped chortling & laughing. The pill maker from Percy Circus — a good stolid servant girl — was taken short & retired to the W.C. I wished I liked buggers — Lytton is giving a party at the Ivy on Monday; & I know they'll be all of that persuasion — Duncan's all right, so's Morgan: but the insipidity of the rest passes belief. Philip came the other night. Oh Molly's in a great

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746

52 Tavistock Square,
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Telephone: Museum 2621

& Schoolmistresses, four thick, writing crosses & noughts in their catalogues - what d'you think they do it for? - to give their friends? But to return: I should like you to paint a large, large picture; where everything would be brought perfectly firmly together, yet all half flying off the canvas in rapture. I have now said enough - The show was only just open: there was a youth praising Vanessa Bell - "always so interesting (the defunctive Violet Dickinson writes that "V's pictures are splendid") & a more or less idiot boy who had never sent me a card. It is rather a dismal hole, I thought.

Yes, we see the Keynes' & the Frys. We gave up Greece with Roger, partly as he wanted to go when Helen comes come, partly because as L. has to be back on 28th April, we should have rushed it - which seems silly, considering the cost. Next year - God, we've had more of these interminable Press conversations with Angus, & the result is that we are asking Mervyn Arnold Forster to come & see us, with a view to his bring the Manager. Angus seems to agree that he dislikes managing, & Leonard feels that he hasn't got the gift: so we are trying to arrange that he shall stay on

I am asking Julian to dine with us on our way through Paris. He wrote me a very nice letter about Luce & Webster

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(The poet — there was a poet called Webster) once.

Sunday
20th March
1927

Dearest,

I don't know how your sense of justice reconciles itself to asking me for 20 pages when you send me one, written on a kind of Bromo too. However, let me see. I have several things to tell you. First, I went down to see Quentin yesterday, he having been impounded the week before for roof climbing. I think. We had a walk by the river & a good deal of gossip. He said I was to tell you that he was following in his elder brother's footsteps — ragging, I gather. He seemed very well, very tall, cropped like a convict, rather bored with school I thought, & wanting to talk about pictures. We had tea & he met several Oxonians but said he did not want to talk to them. He was going to a Debating Society dinner so ate a comparatively small tea. We went to the movies, & he was very scornful of a great seduction scene in China. We also talked a great deal about our

next relative. He was very charming as usual, & if anything older & better informed than I am. We cracked the usual jokes about the Keynes'. We dined there the other night, by the way. Lydia & Harland between them have consummated the decoration of the drawing room by picking up at a sale some primrose coloured satin curtains, sprinkled with violet wreaths, which hang tight & skimpy across the windows & are met by a sky blue carpet of the thickest pile. You ceiling decorations have been whitewashed; several 18th century candelabras from Maple's imported & the whole effect is bright & tight & ~~flar~~ shiny as you could wish. But Maynard is apparently conscience stricken about luxury & gave us no wine, a poor dinner, & only old broken springed lodging house chairs to sit in. They are off to Tilton; how you must be looking forward to your tennis parties in the summer!

Then a voice on the telephone recalled me 30 years at a leap the other day. Something mincing, powdered, affected, vulgar, effusive, fawning, – who do you think?

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Ethel Dilke! She wanted me to lunch with her & give a prize to a Frenchman. But I promptly invited ~~her~~ her here for a date unknown, & so shall escape— unless you insist upon a rapprochement. Then we dined with the Sangers, & who should be there but an incredibly touzled, long coated woman— blurred—bleared—smudged—muted—like a wingless bluebottle—old Dobbin & her husband. I took strongly against her, though no doubt she is harmless enough. She has taken up furniture decoration, & her finger nails have permanently suffered.

Roger of course changed his mind, as soon as we had taken rooms at Cassis, & would have gone to Greece. This is remitted till next year, when a large party is going for several weeks. You'll be glad to hear. Dunlan has refused, if I am of the party. I bear him no grudge. I submit to all his spites. People say that he is a great genius. Who am I that I should complain?[2]

Then Dick Strachey has got his

Girl with child & has had to marry her. As for the Hogarth
Press, some strange compromise, too difficult to explain, has been
arrived at. I rather think Morwyn A.F. will become
manager in the autumn. Mrs Cartwright is decidedly
queer, & I hope in time to supplant her by Rachel
MacCarthy who is efficient merry & like a little teapot
to look at. The MacCarthys of course being on their
beam ends gave us a magnificent dinner of 7
courses the other night. Desmond was in great spirits,
is going to Contrexéville to do a cure, & then to Italy in
May. The fund is already about £350 I think
~~So~~ but he says he intends to regard it merely as a loan.
He has prospects of great wealth in the near future.

NYPL

Do you want me to do anything or bring anything?
If so, write. I want to bring a little cadeau to
ingratiate myself with Angelica. Is there
anything she wants? I count the days till we leave.
Society here has become intolerable — save for Edith Sitwell who
was fascinating the other day — very beautiful — & full of
entrancing stories about her mothers frauds: how she was
made to catch bluebottles as a child & so on: otherwise I
pine for the society of Cassis, which seems to me perfect:
I rather wish we were spending all our time there. Can
we go to Toulon? Can we buy some furniture? some
China? Now I must do my Italian lesson on the
gramophone — C B.

HAMILL 61/166

Nov 28
1927

52 T. S.

Sunday.

Dont bother about a taxi — we will come by the Bus, as we shant bring more than we can carry. I hope not having an evening dress wont cut me off from Cams Society to which I look forward with passion.

Your caryatides have come — & ~~Great~~ greatly improve my room. The old char is a little surprised. They only just get in.

Roger lectured for 2 hours at the Queens Hall to 2,000 people — was a great success, but I had the typhoid germs strongly & couldnt go. I'll

We are of course travelling on the same boat as Ethel, Nan, & Raymond. 75 ✓

Keep the news of the Quarter through, so that you may have some motive for wishing to see me.

No tea, no parents come yet, but I'll take steps if they don't.

Adrian, Helen & Roger are about to drop in:

I'm very excited already & have just been putting all my clothes on the floor — that is the beginning of packing. I suppose.

Julian is dining with us on Wednesday.

We'll come up on Thursday I daresay.

Y B.

HAMILL 2/10/68

NYPL

Hotel de France
Palermo.

9th April
1927

Dearest,

Will there be a special allowance for letters written under circumstances of great difficulty? If so, this one must be paid at a rate of 17 inches by 8 3/4: oil: canvas: still life. We are sitting in our bedroom after dinner. The light is suspended in thick glass dome feet above my head. Leonard is dusting the table with his bandanna. I have made an awful mess with various odds & ends accumulated during my travels: several packets of cigarettes for instance have been ground to powder. There are explosions going on in the street & a general buzz & hum which rather entice me to step out into the square & go to the movies: but we are off to Segesta early tomorrow so we are having a quiet night. However, they are at this moment marching through the Square, playing a band, with lanterns. & some sacred

object under a panoply. This Easter, I suppose. I like the Roman Catholic religion. I say this an attempt at art: Leonard is outraged. We burst into a service ~~with~~ of little Girls in white veils this morning which touched me greatly. It seems to me simply the desire to create genie slightly crooked, & no God in it at all. Then there are little boys brandishing palms tied in red ribbon & sugar Lambs everywhere — surely rather sympathetic & to me more attuned than those olive trees which 'the old gentlemen are for ever painting at street corners in Cassis.

Looking out of the carriage window at Civita Vecchia, whom should we ~~sit~~ see, sitting ~~sid~~ side by side on a bench, but D. H. Lawrence & Norman Douglas — unmistakable: Lawrence pierced & penetrated; Douglas hoglike & brindled. They were swept off by train one way & we went on to Rome. I am sure Rome is the city where I shall come to die — a few months before death however, for obviously the country round it is far the loveliest in the world. I don't myself care so much for the melodramatic

mountains here, which go the colour of picture post card at sunset; but outside Rome it is perfection — smooth, suave, flowing, classical, with the sea on one side, hills on the other, a flock of sheep here, & an olive grove. There I shall come to die: & I suggest as an idea you may consider, the foundation of a colony of the aged — Roger, you, Lytton, I: all sunken cheeked, tottering & urbane, supporting each other's steps along Roman roads; ~~begging~~ I don't mind if we do die at the street corner: you with a beautiful handkerchief over your head (how ashamed you made me feel of my poor partridges' rumps!) & the rest of us with large sticks in our hands. A death colony will certainly become desirable. However we only had time to see the Coliseum & to eat a vast dish of maccaroni: Then we crossed over to Palermo by ~~ni~~ night & I shared a cabin with an unknown by by no means romantic Swedish lady who complained that there was no lock ~~to~~ on the door, whereupon I poked my head out from the curtain & said in my best French "Madame, we have neither of us

any cause for fear" which happily she took in good part. Its odd how much the Scandinavian scrape, scent, gurgle & clean at night considering the results next morning: as hard as a board, & as gray as a scullery pail. She suggested ~~vegetable~~ nothing but paring potatoes. Much though I love my own sex, my gorge heaves at the travelling female. We had two with us from Toulon to Mentone, arch & elderly, with handbags packed with face powder & complexions that not all the thyme & mint in England could sweeten — elderly virgins from Cheltenham, playing golf in France; but one feels sure they cant hit the ball — they cant do anything — they spend enough to keep you & me a year on their clothes — they have no reason to exist in this world or the next.

We have seen with Leal Taylor & a young man called ~~Fr~~ Cox (not Fox) here; but happily they are devoted & inseparable. Otherwise I find the clergy & the old ladies very fascinating; I find the architecture divine. Pillars of pale ~~grey~~ green & pink marble like avenues of birch trees disappearing one behind another: immense

NYPL

distances: vast spaces: people like ants; everything very light, gay & spacious — Why, I ask you, cant we build like that? You cant think how beautiful the human figure looks properly displayed on these staircases. I have seen the mosaics: there is one of hunting which I liked; but the gilt tends to be tinselly. My taste is naturally so bad that I dont in the ~~le~~ least mind exposing it.

Would you write to me at

Hotel Hassler — New York
8 Piazza Trinita dei Monti
Rome. (we shall be there from 22nd to 26th)

Please say
1: what did the oculist say about your eyes? Where could I buy old stuff?, rings? China?
2. Which are good places to dine at in Rome?

Leonard would like to have kissed you; but was too shy. We get on with my Dog Italian & Leonards pure Latin. The people are charming to us.

My love to my nephews, if they are there. I long to be at Julian about his dancing mice — y B.